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ABSTRACT

The contributions of personal qualities and role behavior to the leadership of college presidents are discussed. Managerial leadership might be viewed as a developmental process, whereby different personal qualities and role behaviors are important to leader identification, selection, and evaluation. When individuals are first identified as potential leaders, characteristics such as physical appearance, social poise, intelligence, age, and education come into play. In the search, screening, and selection process for academic leaders, the focus is whether the individual is judged capable of continued growth and development. The third major stage is job performance and whether the leader meets the responsibilities of the position (i.e., demonstrates appropriate behavior in roles such as planning, organizing, directing, and communicating). The perceived effectiveness of presidential leadership is a function of personal qualities, college characteristics, situational demands, and sociocultural values, as well as interactions of these factors. Implications concerning training programs in administrative leadership and the evaluation of presidential performance are considered. (SW)

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PERSONAL QUALITIES AND ROLE BEHAVIOR IN PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

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PERSONAL QUALITIES AND ROLE BEHAVIOR
IN PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

A review of over forty years of research into leader behavior implies that leadership can be defined -- to good advantage -- as:

> the initiation and encouragement of an activity in which the successful completion of specific tasks or the accomplishment of particular goals is dependent upon the cooperative, concerted efforts of members of a group or organization and which involve communicative (informing, recognizing, rewarding, reporting, etc.) efforts of one or more members who are identified as leaders and whose role and contributions are clearly differentiated from those of other members.

In various studies each of the included phrases have been broken out for intensive analysis, and each -- at one time or another -- has been regarded as the crucial dimension in leader behavior. A substantial proportion of the research, however, has dealt with leadership in terms of its effectiveness in realizing group aspirations, ambitions, goals, or other values. And a majority of the research, no doubt, leads to the conclusion that leader effectiveness is often the results of interactions between personal qualities or characteristics of individual leaders and group characteristics and/or situational demands. Thus, the failure of trait-and-factor theories to explain leadership and the weakness of time-and-place theories in predicting or verifying the effectiveness of leader behavior. Whatever leadership is, it is a function of subtle and complex interactions among leaders, groups, and situations (Fincher, in press).

Academic and/or presidential leadership has not been studied as frequently or with the same intensive analysis as leadership in military organizations, business corporations, political or governmental agencies, and other societal institutions. There are good reasons to believe, nonetheless, that presidential leadership is a function of personal

qualities and role behavior and their respective interactions with situational demands or characteristics. There are also reasons to believe that in the emergence, selection, and performance of leader behavior different personal qualities may come into play as academic leaders are identified, chosen, observed, and evaluated in terms of their effectiveness.

Leadership as a Developmental Process

In Table 1 an attempt has been made to place personal qualities and role behavior in a provisional structure that has many similarities to the developmental stages of adulthood or the life cycle of American males. The essential feature of Table 1 is simply the effort to view presidential leadership as developmental stages, with varying periods of transition. In the early stages of leadership when individuals are first identified as potential leaders, attributed qualities or characteristics such as physical appearance, social poise, and apparent intelligence come into play. Age, sex, and race are initial factors in group expectations that particular individuals will eventually attempt to lead the group, or be chosen as a leader in some specific task. Faculty background and formal education are perceived factors in both the emergence of leader behavior and the identification of potential leaders. The personal qualities that come into play at this particular stage are, for the most part, attributes that the individual may not have consciously acquired or developed. Thus, they reflect the individual's state of being, i.e. what or who the individual is; what he or she has going for him- or herself; or we might have called at one time the individual's social stimulus value.

Table 1.

A Provisional Theoretical Structure
for Administrative Leadership

Emergence and Selection		Performance and Effectiveness
R O L E B E H A V I O R		Planning Skills & Methods Organizing Capabilities Guidance and Direction Staff Selection & Development Communication & Rapport Effectiveness in: Interpersonal Relations Cooperative Efforts Delegating Authority Assessing Results Rewarding Performance
B E C O M I N G	Continuing Development Administrative Competence Commitment/Dedication Interpersonal Skills Effectiveness with Groups Professional Reputation Experience/Expertise Social/Emotional Maturity	
B E I N G	Age/Sex/Race Physical Appearance Socioeconomic Status Intelligence Emotional Stability Ease of Expression Social Poise Family Background Formal Education	

SOURCE: Cameron Fincher, "Administrative Leadership in Higher Education" in John Smart (Ed.) Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research, Volume III, New York: Agathon Press, Inc. (To be published in 1987).

In the search, screening, and selection process for academic leaders the discussion of personal qualities quickly turns to the individual's state of becoming: i.e. what the individual is capable of accomplishing; his or her potential for continued professional development; interpersonal skills and professional competencies that are still developing or maturing. These personal qualities are called achieved characteristics because they are often perceived as competencies that the individual is directly responsible for, as personal qualities the individual has either consciously developed, or as experiential results that the individual has achieved or accomplished by taking advantage of his or her opportunities to develop and mature. As a conspicuous example, an academic leader's effectiveness in working with groups is an inferred ability that is believed to be developed through actual experience in working with groups. But even more important is the expectation of others that the individual is capable of continued growth and development; he or she is not yet the person he or she will be.

The third major stage is that of job performance. In this developmental phase the individual leaders begin to meet fully the responsibilities of his or her position, and he or she does so through appropriate role behavior. All presidents must plan, organize, guide, direct, select, develop, and communicate. Most presidents learn to play appropriate roles, or they will not endure. Often their role-playing is more symbolic than substantive, and some presidents apparently survive despite a genuine lack of substantive leadership. But both symbolic and substantive role behavior are needed in most academic presidencies.

There is no little paradox in the likelihood that role behavior is easily acquired than the personal qualities that college and university

presidents must have. And yet, there has been a widespread reluctance to establish educational or training programs in administrative leadership. The great majority of educational efforts in administration remain self-instruction, on-the-job training, or inservice professional development and an underlying assumption that leaders can be selected but not trained for higher-level decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution. Doctoral programs in higher education are not highly regarded as stepping stones to presidential appointment, and most inservice training and development programs place an undue emphasis on the technocratic features of administrative decision making instead of instruction in useful concepts and principles of leadership. Where leadership is the topic of training seminars or workshops, it is more likely to be discussed superficially in terms of leadership styles than in concepts and principles of substance.

Effectiveness in Leadership

The perceived or judged effectiveness of presidential leadership is, as clearly demonstrated by the extensive literature on college and university presidents, a function of personal qualities, institutional characteristics, situational demands, and sociocultural values. The emphasis placed upon presidential screening, selection, appointment, assessment, and evaluation just as clearly demonstrates that effectiveness in institutional leadership is expected by governing boards and other institutional constituencies. Effectiveness is the criterion by which the academic presidency is judged and on any given occasion, personal qualities, institutional indices, situational events, and sociocultural values may be seized as evidence of presidential

effectiveness in leadership. Besieged presidents may remind critics of their doctoral degrees from prestigious institutions and their previous Washington appointments; they may cite institutional statistics that tell a story of growth and progress or depict changes in situational demands that justify difficult decisions and unpopular actions; or they may insist that traditional values are still in place and untarnished because of presidential defenses. And yet, it is quite true that no single combination of personal qualities, no single pattern of institutional characteristics, no general or particular situational demands, and no list of educational truths ensures the effectiveness of presidential leadership.

Much to the contrary, effectiveness in presidential leadership would appear to benefit from the interactions of personal qualities, role behavior, and situational demands in ways that we poorly understand. It is quite possible that each institution of higher education and each president are -- as so often claimed -- unique. The permutations combinations of personal qualities, role behavior, and situational demands would virtually assure a unique pattern of variables for each president if time were taken to establish such patterns.

A more precise statement of the above can be made as follows:

$$L_{pres} = f\,(Q_{pers} \times B_{role} \times S_{T_i+P_j}),$$

in which presidential leadership is a function of the interactions among:

Q_{pers} (personal qualities);

B_{role} (role behavior); and

$S_{T_i+P_j}$ (the situational demands that prevail at a particular time and in a particular place).

In varying combinations, personal qualities and role behavior offer researchers an enriched source of hypotheses concerning presidential leadership. The testing of such hypotheses, where time and other resources permit, should add greatly to our understanding of leadership in American colleges and universities and to the effectiveness of that leadership in producing constructive change in educational policy and practices. The study of interactive effects, however, would not appear to be a reliable means of assessing and/or evaluating presidential effectiveness. At this stage of development in theory and research, we simply do not know enough about interactive effects to use them wisely in performance review and evaluation.

If we could study systematically the interactive effects of presidential leadership, we would be able to evaluate presidential effectiveness in the following manner when:

$$E_{P/L} = \frac{D_{S_{ij}} + E_{S_{ij}}}{(Q_{pers} + B_{role} + S_{ij})}$$

in which:

$D_{S_{ij}}$ = the perceived, assessed, or judged situational demands existing in a particular situation; and

$E_{S_{ij}}$ = the judgment of informed observers concerning the public expectations of involved constituencies.

We should know enough in 1987, nonetheless, to believe that the effectiveness of presidential leadership <u>should be evaluated</u> in terms of the individual's performance in carrying out his or her presidential duties. In other words, the assessment of personal qualities should

usually be secondary to the evaluation of role behavior. As valuable as some personal qualities are in screening and selection, they should not play a vital role in presidential assessment and evaluation after a president has been in office long enough to develop appropriate role behavior, with some consistency of style and substance. To re-emphasize the point, there would seem to be an ethical obligation to assess and evaluate presidential performance as appropriate and effective role behavior and not to evaluate the personal qualities of the individuals carrying out their duties and responsibilities. A similar argument could be mustered against the evaluation of presidential performance solely on the basis of effectiveness. In 1987 it is quite difficult to specify what "the bottom line" in presidential effectiveness might be and despite the great lip service given management-by-results, there are reasons to believe that many institutions succeed in spite of their presidents and not because of them. Yet, presidential leadership is essential to institutional advancement and the continued development of higher education in our particular society and culture.

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